

Patricia Banta, Manager, Government Grants

The Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY)

The Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) is the largest not-for-profit home health agency in the nation. We have been the leader in home- and community-based health care in the New York City metropolitan region since 1893. Our staff of nearly 10,000 served more than 106,000 individuals last year, with an average daily census of 25,000. We provide short-term skilled nursing care and rehabilitation therapy; long-term comprehensive care for the elderly and children with special needs; hospice; specialty services in Diabetes and Wound Care; multicultural programs; and community mental health services. The VNSNY Center for Home Care Policy & Research is a nationally recognized institute that conducts scientifically rigorous, policy-relevant research on the management, costs and outcomes of home- and community-based health care. The findings from our research promote the delivery of cost-effective care in the home and community.

VNSNY serves a large multi-cultural population – with language and cultural differences, requiring specially trained staff. VNSNY patients speak 38 languages. 49% of our patients have 2 or more co-morbidities, 49% are deficient in 4-6 Activities of Daily Living (ADLs); and 22% are cognitively impaired. The average VNSNY patient takes 10 or more medications per day, and 46% are over 70 years old. More than 12,000 (14%) of our patients are dually eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, reflecting a population with complex care needs, who often have no family or other caregiver supports.

To respond to our patients' diverse needs, VNSNY has initiated a variety of program and service models that help keep the elderly independent and living in the community for as long as possible. We believe that these should serve as models for replication throughout the nation and urge that the WHCOA recommend their expansion.

Managed Long Term Care (MLTC)

VNSNY is one of 16 Medicaid Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) programs throughout New York State for nursing home eligible older adults who want to continue to live at home but need assistance to do so. A single case manager develops an individualized plan of care with the member and their family and coordinates all of the member's health, medical, social, and long term care needs, following the member across all settings and sites of care. The comprehensive benefits package includes case management, home health care, community-based services, home modification, nursing home care, outpatient services, medication management and prescription drugs. Some of New York's MLTC programs, including the one operated by VNSNY, provide integrated, high-quality and cost-effective care to members in their own home, enabling member choice to retain their doctor and other health care providers.

Disease Management

VNSNY is positioned to implement a disease management program for individuals with chronic conditions -- such as congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, and diabetes. Disease Management programs enhance high quality, cost-effective care for chronically ill individuals, through coordination and management of medical care. Through no fault of their own, patients with chronic conditions—have accounted for a disproportionate amount of health care expenditures. We appropriate

case coordination and management, we hope to reduce unnecessary hospitalizations and expensive emergency room visits.

Hospice and palliative care

VNSNY has recognized the need to expand hospice and palliative care services. As the elderly progress toward the last stages of life, they often suffer needlessly from uncomfortable symptoms, constant pain, and fear and anxiety about their future. Our health care system, focused on curative measures, provides very little of the care that would address and alleviate the suffering of those who are dying and their families. We urge expansion of community-based palliative care services especially to those who do not qualify for the Medicare hospice benefit but whose quality of life would improve dramatically with these supportive services.

Elder-friendly communities

VNSNY's Research Center developed the AdvantAge Initiative to help communities measure their elder-friendliness -- their capacity to support and engage older residents. The AdvantAge initiative team provided technical assistance to help communities across the country interpret a wide range of socio-economic and health indicators, which are critical to sustain older people in their communities. The Initiative's purpose is to help communities prepare for the growing number of older adults who are "aging in place" while creating livable neighborhoods for people of all ages. The National Governor's Association, at their recent meeting, adopted as their #1 recommendation the AdvantAge Initiative to promote elderly-ready communities. We urge the WHCOA to recognize the importance of such initiatives.

Thank you.

For additional information contact:

Judy Duhl, Director of Government Affairs, VNSNY
107 East 70 Street
New York, N.Y. 10021
212-609-1543 or jduhl@vnsny.org

Pat Banta, Manager of Government Grants, VNSNY
107 East 70 Street
New York, N.Y. 10021
212-609-1538 or patricia.banta@vnsny.org